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Andropov: Brezhnev's death, and a new type of leader

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Since 1977, Yuri Andropov had been given credit in the West for a degree of "liberalism" mainly through articles written by Boris Rabbot, who emigrated to the United States in 1976.

Mr. Rabbot had been a senior researcher in the Institute of Sociology in Moscow and claimed to be a member of the circle of then-President Leonid Brezhnev's aides and speechwriters, almost President Brezhnev's personal friend.

He maintained that "Andropov's liberal views would surprise people in the West" and that he proposed allowing private restaurants and beauty parlors — although he considered that "his future as a leader is hindered by a liver ailment that requires constant treatment."

But in August, 1982, the direct-dial telephone links to the Soviet Union, which had been introduced in 1979 as one of the conditions of the 1980 Olympic Games being held in Moscow, were suddenly disconnected. Telephoning Moscow became extremely difficult, with long or indefinite delays, and calling other Soviet cities and towns became almost impossible.

In September a new restriction was introduced which severely limited the exchange of information. There was a ban on mailing printed materials abroad, irrespective of subject matter or date of publication. Only official institutional mailing of printed matter was allowed without a permit.

Any individual, Soviet or foreign, who wanted to send books abroad had



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to get a permit from the Commission on Cultural Exchange in the State Libraries and had to pay a customs duty of 100 percent. Postal restrictions like these had not existed since Stalin's times.

The censorship of letters was also increased and many letters, even those that had been registered, began to disappear. Fewer citizens were given permission to travel abroad and academic exchange became very difficult.

The struggle between the supporters of Konstantin Chernenko (Brezhnev's choice for his successor) and Mr. Andropov's supporters resumed at the beginning of October. It now took the form of petty personal accusations.

There were rumors about Mr. An-

dropov's possible non-Russian origin. His mother's maiden name sounds Jewish, and it is possible that Mr. Andropov is at least one-quarter Jewish. His surname is not a very common Russian one, and because he was born in the North Caucasus some rumors suggested that his original name had been Andropian, i.e. Armenian. His late wife was also said to have been Jewish.

Russian nationalism constitutes a very strong undercurrent in some official circles, and these rumors were attempts to discredit Mr. Andropov.

Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev died from a heart attack at 8:30 a.m. on November 10, 1982. As is usual, the circumstances of his death were not disclosed. Later, some information began to filter through.

Mr. Brezhnev is said to have died during breakfast, after leaving the room to get something from his study. His wife, who remained in the dining room, began to worry when he did not return after several minutes. She found him lying unconscious on the floor of his study and immediately raised the alarm.

Mr. Brezhnev's personal doctors were on duty 24 hours a day, and kept resuscitation and first-aid equipment in the room next to his apartment. This equipment had saved his life when he had suffered a stroke in 1975. Then his condition had been critical for four hours.

Now the doctors again battled several hours to save him, but without success — the few critical minutes lost before the alarm was raised rendered his state of "clinical death" irreversible. It was only at 12:30 p.m. that a team of doctors declared him